

Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources
June 22, 2010
Meeting Summary

Convened 9:00 a.m., Room 214, Cross Office Building, Augusta

Present:

Sen. Seth Goodall, Senate Chair
Sen. Doug Smith
Rep. Bob Duchesne, House Chair
Rep. Jane Eberle
Rep. John Martin
Rep. Brian Bolduc
Rep. Melissa Walsh Innes
Rep. Joan Welsh
Rep. Jim Hamper
Rep. Jane Knapp

Absent:

Sen. Deborah Simpson
Rep. Bernard Ayotte
Rep. Peter Edgecomb

Committee Chair Senator Seth Goodall convened the fourth 2010 interim meeting of the Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources and asked the members to introduce themselves. Senator Goodall then directed the Committee through the agenda.

Reduce, Reuse, Recycle - Committee Discussion

The Committee discussed possible endorsement of the recycling options and alternative approaches presented to the Committee by the State Planning Office at its June 14th meeting. The alternatives included options related to cardboard; leaf & yard waste; glass, plastic, paper & metal; food waste; commercial recycling; and household hazardous waste.

- Cardboard - SPO's recommendation: Recycle all commercial and residential cardboard via disposal ban or recycling mandate.
The Committee requested SPO, with DEP, to thoroughly analyze the recovery and recycling of corrugated cardboard so that the 125th Legislature can have sufficient information to consider SPO's recommendation to ban the disposal of cardboard and require recycling of cardboard. The analysis should include the economics of the proposal, including the amount of money municipalities will save, the amount of cardboard captured, necessary education and input from interested parties, including Maine Municipal Association, merchants and waste haulers. The Committee requested SPO and DEP to report back to the Committee in January.
- Leaf and yard waste - SPO's recommendation: Compost all leaf and yard waste via disposal ban or recycling mandate.
The Committee noted that more education is needed with a focus on working with municipalities to increase the recycling rate.
- Glass, plastic, paper and metal - SPO's recommendation: Increase recycling by 10% through incentives (curb, pay per bag, local ordinance or mandate).
The Committee noted that more education is needed and additional information should be provided to municipalities but ultimately it is a local decision.

- Food waste - SPO's recommendation: Initiate a pilot project to compost food waste in one major service center.
The Committee learned that this recommendation is currently being addressed. DEP is in the process of putting together an EPA grant proposal for a pilot project.
- Commercial recycling - SPO's recommendation: Increase outreach to businesses, increase commercial recycling by 10%.
The Committee agrees that more outreach and education is needed but at this time it must be done without any additional funding.
- Household hazardous waste - SPO's recommendation: Build 14 new hazardous waste collection sites.
The Committee noted that additional funding is not likely at this time. One suggestion is to assess a fee on the sale of specific household hazardous waste items. The Committee asked DEP to include a discussion of this topic in its next product stewardship report to the Committee.

The Committee also discussed the idea of increasing fees on landfill disposal and using the fees to support municipal recycling, similar to the Vermont model. The Committee concluded that there may be growing consensus about assessing higher fees, but that consensus outside of the Committee is needed to ensure there are no unintended consequences. This idea may be brought up again next session.

The Committee also discussed a concern that DEP has certain roles related to recycling but is not involved in development of the State Recycling Plan. After discussion with Sue Inches (SPO) and Paula Clark (DEP) the Committee would like to see more collaboration between the agencies in development of the State Plan and when legislation related to recycling comes before the Committee, they would like to hear from both agencies.

The overall conclusion is that there is consensus on the Committee to support "reduce, reuse, recycle" and a stronger educational initiative including discussions with the private sector and municipalities is needed.

Solid Waste Disposal Capacity Projections from SPO and DEP

Sue Inches, Director of Policy for the State Planning Office presented an overview of SPO's solid waste disposal capacity projections. SPO presented two scenarios - a low growth scenario and a moderate growth scenario. Under the low growth scenario (which assumes 1% annual growth beginning in 2012, a starting fill rate of 700,000 tons/year at Juniper Ridge Landfill, a starting fill rate of 300,000 tons/year at Crossroads Landfill and the status quo on waste deliveries, policy framework, etc.) the disposal capacity at Juniper Ridge is projected to be 0 in 2017 with total statewide capacity in 2017, including Crossroads Landfill, projected to be 1,573,379 cubic yards. Under the moderate growth scenario (which assumes 2.8% annual growth beginning in 2012, a starting fill rate of 700,000 tons/year at Juniper Ridge Landfill, a starting fill rate of 300,000 tons/year at Crossroads Landfill and the status quo on waste deliveries, policy framework, etc.) the disposal capacity at Juniper Ridge is projected to be 0 in 2016 with total statewide capacity in 2016, including Crossroads Landfill, projected to be 1,799,638 cubic yards. A copy of SPO's landfill capacity projections was submitted to the Committee.

Paula Clark of the Department of Environmental Protection presented an overview of DEP's capacity projections which were used by the department as one of the factors in the Draft Department Order for Juniper Ridge Landfill's "Application for Public Benefit Determination". Ms. Clark noted that DEP determined there was sufficient statewide capacity for 10 years, while capacity at Juniper Ridge was likely to be 8 to 9 years. In making its projection, DEP used the 2008 volume of waste disposed at Juniper Ridge which is 629,357.10 tons. A copy of each of the following documents was submitted to the Committee: DEP's "Juniper Ridge Landfill Waste Volume Summary and DEP's "Amount of Waste Disposed in Juniper Ridge Landfill, After Purchase by State of Maine"

Solid Waste Landfill Capacity at Juniper Ridge and Crossroads Landfills

The Committee received comments from Casella Waste Systems, Waste Management, the Town of Norridgewock and other interested parties.

- Brian Oliver (Casella) noted that if Juniper Ridge is not expanded they anticipate a fill rate of 650,000 tons per year.
- Jeff McGown (Waste Management) noted that Crossroads Landfill has about 12 years of capacity remaining.
- Michelle Flewelling (Norridgewock Town Manager) submitted a letter and reiterated the town's request to include protections for the town if any change to the law is made which would allow Crossroads to expand.
- Mrs. Fredericks (Crossroads abutter) noted that it is unlikely "reduce, reuse & recycle" will be successful if commercial landfills are allowed to expand.
- Kevin Roche (Ecomaine) submitted a letter and noted that imposing or increasing the fee by \$6.00 per ton on landfilling raw solid waste would discourage out-of-state waste, extend the life of our landfills and incentivize recycling, composting and waste-to-energy.
- Greg Louder (Municipal Review Committee) submitted a letter and noted that SPO's 2.8% growth scenario is severely overreaching.

Based on the Projected Capacity, Discussion of Potential Actions

The Committee made the following conclusions:

1. The state has landfill disposal capacity until around 2018.
2. The amount of time needed for permitting additional capacity is approximately 4, 5 or 6 years.
3. The Legislature needs to continue to pay strict attention to the capacity issue.
4. There is no consensus right now to allow commercial landfill expansion.
5. It is important to educate the next Natural Resources Committee on:
 - The differences between the state-owned landfill and commercial landfills
 - The extent of the proposed expansions at Juniper Ridge Landfill and Crossroads Landfill
 - The timeline regarding remaining capacity and permitting timeframes.
6. The Committee needs to pay attention to the issue of SPO dual roles as owner of Juniper Ridge Landfill and as solid waste management planners.

Adjournment

The Joint Standing Committee on Natural Resources concluded its meetings for the interim.